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C O N F I D E N T I A L LILONGWE 000139

SIPDIS

FOR PRM/AFR MARY LANGE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/18/2014

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SUBJECT: RWANDAN REFUGEES IN MALAWI READY TO RETURN HOME

REF: 03 LILONGWE 1241

Classified By: POLOFF KIERA EMMONS FOR REASONS 1.5 B & D

1. (C) Rwandan refugees in Malawi are reportedly eager to return home, but inexplicably not yet moving in large numbers. Poloff met with a Dzaleka refugee camp administrator on February 19 at the camp, who said that many Rwandan refugees have been asking about returning home, and frustration with delays is increasing at the camp. He said there are currently at least 15 families prepared to return immediately to Rwanda, with many more interested in departing soon. The administrator stated that new Rwandan refugees are being registered, they often demand to know how soon they will be able to return home.

2. (C) The camp administrator estimated the current refugee population to be about 9,500 to 10,000 people, mostly of Burundian and Rwandan origin. (COMMENT: This is contrary to UNHCR resident representative's recent estimate of 13,000 per reftel END COMMENT.) He noted that refugees can be "very difficult" in their movements, pointing out that in 2003 a large number of refugees left Malawi for Mozambique, where refugee conditions were reportedly better, but have since returned.

3. (SBU) WFP's deputy country director told poloff on February 19 that Rwandan refugees are in fact leaving Malawi, but not in a swift and organized manner; one month's estimate was 150 departures, and another's was zero. She said that refugee departures are still not being documented to WFP's satisfaction.

BROWNING